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## JUDGE BATHGATE'S LECTURING EXCURSIONS.

MR JOHN BATHGATE, whom we have described as being absent on leave from his duties as District Judge in Otago, New Zealand, is now about to return to the colony; and at our request, has favoured us with a few notes regarding the work he has gone through since his arrival in Great Britain. These notes on his Lecturing Excursions are in various ways interesting. They shew what can be done for the public advantage by a person of by no means robust constitution, who is regardless of trouble, and feels animated by a desire of doing good. Mr Bathgate's object was to make known the eligibility of New Zealand as a field for immigration to farmers, capitalists, and others. For this purpose, he prepared a series of Lectures on his voyage to England, some of them being written on his passage up the Red Sea, and the others matured during his residence in Peebles, Edinburgh, and elsewhere. Besides this laborious exertion, he prepared a book on the same subject, entitled, 'New Zealand, its Resources and Prospects,' which has been published at a small price, and has had a large circulation. We have no doubt the book has effectually fulfilled its design; and, along with the Lectures delivered at various towns to large and appreciative audiences, will have influenced many to fix on New Zealand as a desirable place of settlement. When we consider that Mr Bathgate is not a professional land-agent, and has no purpose to serve, further than the pleasure of recording his convictions, drawn from personal knowledge and well-ascertained facts, we may view him as one who unselfishly gives up his leisure for the public benefit.

Taking a review of his proceedings before quitting Edinburgh in May, to take shipping in the Thames for New Zealand, he writes as follows: 'In the course of November last, I had the pleasure of delivering lectures at the following Scottish towns: Haddington, Dirleton, Dalkeith, Selkirk, Innerleithen, and Peebles. I was everywhere well received; but while the meetings were

very successful and the audiences apparently much interested, no practical results followed. This probably arose from the fact that the land in Scotland is principally held on lease for nineteen years, and the tenants accordingly were unable to contemplate immediate emigration. The plan I generally adopted in a lecture was to assume that, in order to obviate the intense competition which had raised rents to an abnormal height, it was necessary that some of the farmers, especially the younger men, should leave for a new country. The question was then asked: Where should they go to? I answered I would select the country which had the greatest number of points of excellence for insuring success in agriculture and comfort in life. The points suggested were: 1. A genial and healthful climate. 2. A fertile soil. 3. Good communications by roads and railways. 4. Abundance of water and fuel. 5. Freedom from locusts, mosquitoes, and other insect plagues. 6. Variety in production—that is, a country having something else than agriculture to depend on, such as wool, gold, manufactures, &c. 7. Ready market. 8. Social advantages, such as good education; and 9. Good government, law, and order. I shewed where some colonies were deficient in several important points, and proved that New Zealand was the only country known which possessed the whole of these qualifications in happy combination. In every case where, after the facts were fully stated, I asked for a favourable opinion from the audience, it was accorded with acclamations almost bordering on enthusiasm.

'In December I went to London; and while there, I received a pressing invitation from Mr Alderman Hedley of Tynemouth to visit him at his place, West Chirton House, near North Shields. I went down to see him, and found that he had just returned from New Zealand. About two years ago, he became afflicted with severe nervous depression. He tried a ramble through France, Germany, and Italy; and returned home without improvement. The medical men urged that he should take a long voyage to Melbourne. He

yielded most reluctantly to their advice, and sailed for Melbourne. When he arrived there, he felt he was better in his general health; but his burden still weighed him down. Having letters of introduction to New Zealand friends, he next went thither, and was hospitably received at a station in Southland. In fourteen days he became a new man. The depression left him, and he was able to ride forty miles at a stretch, whilst in England he could not have ridden four to save his life. He attributed the beneficial change to the exhilarating and pure atmosphere. He travelled all over the colony in the enjoyment of unbounded pleasure in the new scenes which came before him; and after making numerous friends, he returned to England in November last, loud in his praises of the colony, and feeling as if he could not be grateful enough for the benefits he had received. It was kindly arranged that I should deliver lectures in Newcastle, Darlington, and Middlesborough, and each of them proved an unqualified success. At Newcastle, the Mayor presided, and the room was packed with a thousand people.

'At this meeting, I felt I had a thorough command of the audience; and before I was done, there was so much interest excited, that if I could have said a ship was waiting at the quay in which they might embark for New Zealand, it seemed as if a third at least of the audience would have been willing to go. Mr Hedley followed with a few graphic sentences, corroborating my statements, and giving his recent experience. Immediately after the vote of thanks to the chairman, the platform was mobbed by eager inquirers. The articles in *Chambers's Journal* had proved excellent pioneers, and were undoubtedly the means of drawing together the large attendance. Several of the gentlemen present had made up their minds to leave—men with capital, the very stamp of settlers we require. One intelligent farmer came forty miles to be present, and he has since given up his farm, and is arranging for his immediate departure. Similar meetings were held at Darlington and Middlesborough. A lady at Darlington, a councillor's wife, waited to be introduced to me, and declared with empressment "It was a charming lecture," and she had enjoyed it so much!

'After a very pleasant week, I returned to London. I then received a kind invitation from Mr Joseph Tangye, a member of the celebrated firm of Tangye Brothers of Birmingham, to visit him at his seat, Tickenhill, near Bewdley, in the valley of the Severn. He had been a constant reader of *Chambers's Journal* since his boyhood. He had been much taken with the articles on New Zealand. The little book had now been published; and he was so pleased with it, that he bought half-a-dozen copies to circulate among his friends. He arranged for a meeting at Kidderminster, three miles distant from his home.

'This meeting passed off equally well with those previous. The Mayor occupied the chair; and as he had recently returned from a tour in New Zealand, he confirmed my statements in his address at the close of the lecture. At the conclusion of my remarks, the applause was very hearty, one lady in front of the gallery so earnest, that she looked as if she would never tire waving her handkerchief. Through Mr Tangye's friend, the lamented Mr J. S. Wright, M.P. for

Nottingham, I was invited to address the Chamber of Commerce, Birmingham. This I did one afternoon with good effect to a crowded meeting, and received a cordial vote of thanks. I took up the question of the indebtedness of the colony, and shewed that the real point was not its amount, but whether it could be profitably used. Mr Wright had informed me that he would catechise me on the debt; but my argument and facts seemed to be appreciated, as no questions were put regarding it. While at Birmingham, I was conducted through the extensive works of Tangye Brothers. In the yard waiting to be tested were two large cranes for the Dunedin Harbour Board. No engine or article is allowed to leave the works until thoroughly tested. The consequence is that the raised letters "Tangye Brothers" are an acknowledged guarantee for excellence. The firm had often been asked by merchants to put the name of the party ordering on the engine, as is done in cutlery; but they have invariably refused, on the ground that they were responsible, and that they wished by care and good workmanship to make their name a voucher for a high standard of excellence.

'After this I was invited to lecture at Leeds, Hull, Louth, and Lincoln; when the dissolution of parliament took place, and disorganised all my plans. As I had to leave Great Britain in the end of May, I have had to renounce the idea, with much regret, of visiting these places. The only engagement I kept was to address the Midland Farmers' Club on May 13th. I had a pleasant meeting there, and an animated discussion followed my address. I understand several of the members have it in contemplation to give up their leases, which are shorter than those in Scotland, with a view to emigrate to New Zealand. I may mention that altogether, as the result of my efforts, considerably over one hundred thousand pounds of capital will flow into the colony with intending settlers from various parts of Britain.

'On every occasion I have discouraged labourers from proceeding to the colony until better times follow the want of employment consequent on the recent monetary crisis. My efforts have been chiefly in the direction of submitting facts for the consideration of farmers with capital, that they might decide whether they would not materially better their circumstances by emigrating to one of the most fertile of our colonies, instead of wasting their energies and resources in vainly striving here against the fierce competition arising against them in other food-producing countries. In all my labours, the articles in *Chambers's Journal*, a periodical which seems to penetrate everywhere, have been most powerful helps. They led to a flood of correspondence, as I have received and answered above a thousand letters from all parts of the world; but I have not grudged the trouble, confidently believing that while I was promoting the interest of my adopted country in the discharge of that duty, I was conferring a favour on many in making known the true elements which alone could lead to success on the part of those who might emigrate thither.'

Successful as Mr Bathgate's Lecturing tours have been, it is proper to say that his arguments have not been unchallenged. Writers in a Dunedin newspaper having questioned some of his facts, on that subject being referred to in the 'Hadding-

tonshire Courier,' Mr Bathgate wrote to the last-mentioned paper as follows:

'I have on no occasion stated as a fact that which I do not fully believe, my belief being based on trustworthy evidence. If you will turn to page 44 of "New Zealand, its Resources and Prospects," a copy of which I forward, you will find the following sentence: "The following estimates have been carefully prepared by an experienced land-owner near Oamaru, in the very centre of the finest wheat-growing district, and may be considered reliable." The point is, whether the testimony of this land-owner is reliable. I therefore give his name and standing. He is Mr John Reid of Elderslie, North Otago, a colonist, like myself, of seventeen years' standing. By his integrity, skill, and enterprise, he has amassed a large fortune, all made in the colony. He is the owner of eighteen thousand acres of the finest agricultural land, in a high state of cultivation. He is universally respected, and his assistance is desired upon every public board on which he is willing to act. He has just been selected by the government as a member of a Royal Commission appointed to inquire and report on the working and administration of our railways. Surely a gentleman of this standing is more reliable than an anonymous writer in a newspaper, who gives no facts to support his opinion. The leading daily paper in Dunedin, "The Otago Daily Times," also expressed a doubt as to the accuracy of my statements. This called forth a most convincing letter from Mr Reid, which the editor published and added: "We with pleasure insert the letter, and are quite satisfied that all the statements of fact have been accurately made." I now inclose you the letter, and as it contains much which cannot fail to be interesting to your readers, I have to request that you insert it as appendix to this communication. I may add that New Zealand has carried off the first prize at the Sydney Exhibition for malting barley and oats. According to files just to hand, the following rates per acre are not unusual this last harvest in the best districts—namely, wheat, sixty bushels; barley, seventy bushels; and oats from eighty to one hundred bushels. It has been a fine season. I leave your readers to compare these rates with those of the very finest seasons in East Lothian.'

The following is Mr Reid's letter to the Editor of the 'Otago Daily Times,' above referred to by Mr Bathgate. As it is important, we give it entire:

'SIR—My attention has been called to an article in your issue of the 10th inst., which I had overlooked, questioning the truth of certain statements made by Mr Bathgate which appeared in *Chambers's Journal* some time since. The statements referred to are not only not overdrawn, but are considerably under the mark. I accept the responsibility of proving their correctness, as they were furnished by me to Mr Bathgate. He instances a farmer who bought a farm for fifteen pounds per acre, and cleared that sum out of his first year's crop. The farmer referred to is Mr Thomas Rainforth, of Teaneraki, whose land adjoins my own; and consequently I had ample opportunity of seeing and knowing of the result referred to. The land was cultivated in a proper manner—a thing which is too seldom the case. The crop sown was barley with grass and clover seed. The yield was seventy

bushels of first-quality grain, besides a quantity of second quality, and the price obtained for the crop in Oamaru was five shillings and eightpence per bushel, which brought the gross yield to over twenty pounds sterling per acre. The whole expense connected with the crop was under four pounds sterling per acre; thus leaving a net return of sixteen pounds sterling, instead of fifteen as stated. In addition to this, the pasture obtained from an outlay of a few shillings per acre for seed is as luxuriant as could be desired, and adds considerably to what Mr Rainforth gains by the crop. Mr Thomson of Columella, also an adjoining proprietor, thrashed out a crop of barley at the same time, which yielded over eighty bushels first-class grain, and which gave a correspondingly large result; in his case nearly doubling the amount paid for the land on which it grew. In both cases those results were obtained by having first-rate land and giving the crop proper cultivation, the proprietors also being fortunate in getting a good price for their produce.

'I could point out numerous instances where net returns of five to fifteen pounds sterling per acre have been made from good land here, but shall content myself in the present instance with merely vindicating the statements referred to in your article of the 10th inst.

'You also doubt the correctness of the statement that a farmer may make twelve hundred pounds sterling per annum from a farm of five hundred acres: this statement I maintain is also under the mark. Mr Bathgate supplies particulars as to how this result may be obtained during an average of seasons. Those figures are very moderately stated. I am aware of much better average results having been obtained from similar areas during the past seven years. As you are doubtless aware, many men embark in farming pursuits who neither have land of their own, capital, nor agricultural experience. Such men have not only to pay the very highest rates of interest, but they are also charged heavy commissions for advances of money. Such interest and commission, although perhaps not too much when the risk to the lender is considered, are a heavy burden to the borrower; and if combined with an utter want of agricultural knowledge and experience, failure is almost a certainty. Such are not the men to whom Mr Bathgate refers, but to those whose five-hundred-acre farms are their own and free of debt, and who have a capital of not less than three pounds sterling per acre to stock the land and work with.

'He assumes that the land is of good quality, and near to a market or port of shipment, as his estimate of its cost will shew—namely, fourteen pounds sterling per acre. His figures, which are based upon very moderate yields and prices, shew a net return of eleven hundred and forty-five pounds sterling (£1,145) from the working of the five hundred acres, after deducting all properly chargeable working expenses, rates, taxes, &c. For the remainder I will copy his statement, namely: "The sum of £1,145 being left as the balance after paying expenses, is chargeable with rent, or interest of the capital expended in purchasing the land. Estimating the cost of the land at fourteen pounds an acre, this at seven and a half per cent. gives a charge of 21s. per acre, or £525 on the farm. Deducting this from the net profit, a balance is left of £620 for the tenant's income;

being 40 per cent. interest on his capital (£1500) invested in stocking the farm." Your remark with reference to the book which he is said to be compiling is, I think, rather unkind and quite unnecessary. However, he is so well known and respected by those who know him, that your advice is not likely to be taken; and his book when published will, I doubt not, be the means of assisting to benefit the colony, and many deserving farmers in Great Britain, who may be influenced thereby to throw in their lot with us.—I am, &c. JOHN REID, *Elderslie, 20th February.*

These letters afford the best evidence of Mr Bathgate's accuracy, as well as of his caution in making statements. There is, however, no end to cavilling. We observe that in a newspaper he is found fault with on the ground that the colony is at present labouring under a severe financial pressure, and that land is selling at reduced prices. To our mind, these ought to be inducements, instead of drawbacks, as far as immigrants with capital are concerned. Now, apparently, is the time for young agriculturists to emigrate to buy tracts of land at a cheap rate with ready-money. By putting off a year or two, during which prices may recover, the chance of getting a bargain may be gone. From the arguments employed by the newspaper in question, it would appear that people should give up trying to better themselves because bankers, through the effects of panic, have restricted their loans. Such restrictions send a shiver only over those who depend on discounting bills and otherwise borrowing. The man who is able to pay his way and to carry on his transactions with cash, has nothing to fear from financial derangements. What intimidates others, inspires him with enterprise. Immigrants with capital, therefore, besides benefiting themselves, would go far towards strengthening the financial condition of the colony, and what seems desirable, they would give employment to the wage-receiving classes, both as regards land and manufacturing industry.

Every piece of fresh information we receive confirms the impression made by Mr Bathgate's luminous statements, that New Zealand has attractions for agriculturists possessing a fair share of capital and spirit, beyond what are offered by any new country we are acquainted with. In conclusion, we take it upon us to thank Judge Bathgate for the trouble he has taken in making the merits of New Zealand so well known to the people of Great Britain. We wish him a pleasant voyage to the colony, and hope that there, the efforts he has made among us will be duly appreciated.

W. C.

## A LIFE'S ATONEMENT.

### CHAPTER XXIII.—HISTORY.

*'There is a spark of goodness here.'*

On a day in spring, when the birds seemed mad with jollity, a little child came singing down a country lane. She carried a basket on her arm, and in one hand she jingled together some eight or ten copper pieces. Two or three fleecy clouds set off the perfect blue of the sky; a light wind, full of the fresh scent of trees and flowers and country earth, fanned the child's face; and no bird in the

hedges or the trees about her sang a blither song than hers. As she danced down the lane, there appeared in the highway before her the figure of a diminutive man in a coat made of an old sack, and corduroy trousers much too large for him. He had a spiky white beard and moustache, and he wore a silk hat battered out of all shape, and foul with dirt. The little maid skipped gaily on rattling her coppers, and the diminutive man paused to regard her. He heard the jingle of the money in her hand, and looked cautiously up and down the road.

'Where are you going, my little dear?' he said as she approached him.

The bits of blue sky which shone in the damsel's eyes clouded, and she stopped with a look of affright. The little man shuffled up to her, and with a sudden cruel grip, caught the child by the wrist and gave her a sharp wrench. She screamed faintly, and dropped both her money and her basket. The little man picked them up, and looking about him with an air of indecision for a moment, flung the basket over the nearest hedge, then put the coppers into his pocket, shook his fist at the child, grinned, and walked away. The little maiden only a minute before so glad and fearless, sat down and wept bitterly. Home was her only refuge, and she trembled to go home, and she was afraid to stay in the lane, which now seemed so dangerous and lonely. So you see she had nothing left but to sit there and cry broken-heartedly.

Perhaps half an hour later, came that way a man with deep sunken black eyes and a sallow face half hidden in a great black beard laced with gray. His black hair hung about his face and neck, and there were many white hairs intermingled with it. He was dressed in broken garments, and his boots scarce clung to his feet. As he walked on slowly with downcast eyes, the noise of the child's weeping struck his ear, and he looked about in a slow dazed inquiring way, as if the sound hurt him. Following the child's cry, he turned into the lane, and there saw the little girl lying on a grassy hillock with her face in her hands. He knelt down beside her and spoke soothingly. 'What is it? Poor little woman. What is it?'

The child looked up at him with her large blue eyes quite overbrimmed with tears. She could not stop crying all at once. Her little breast heaved, and her open lips quivered, and the blue eyes overflowed; but she stretched her arms out to the ragged tramp, as if she trusted him; and he sitting on the hillock, took her on his knee, and put one arm about her neck, and petted and soothed her until she could speak. Then with many sobs, she told her story; and the tramp having heard her to the end, first scrambled through the hedge and restored her basket; and then shewing her a shilling, asked her if that was as much as had been stolen from her. She could not tell; but he bade her run to complete her errand; and away she went with her fears banished and her trouble over. The tramp looked after her for a minute before he resumed his walk. He had parted with his last coin, and now for the first time in his life was penniless. Yet he cared little



for that as he went upon his way. He had nothing to walk for and nowhere to go, yet he walked with a dogged downcast perseverance, which to the eye of any one who had troubled to observe him would have seemed to indicate a purpose. Once or twice men garbed like himself passed him on the way and flung him a rough salutation; but he returned no answer. The sun went down and the air began to be chilly, and he walked on shivering. The darkening road stretched out before him lonely and sad in the twilight. He leaned over a gate and peered into the fields; then climbed the gate, and sauntered to a hay-stack, beside which some twenty or thirty bundles of straw had been thrown down. He nestled under the lee of the stack, and drew the great bundles of straw over him; and lay there dry and snug until a refreshing warmth came over him, and he fell asleep. He was up before dawn, for fear of discovery, and plodding along the road again in the cold and darkness. He grew dolefully hungry; but at that season of the year the fields were bare, and there was no chance for a penniless man to pick up anything. He walked all day, and housed himself at night in a barn to which he found a chance entrance. Next day saw him again upon the road, travelling more slowly and with greater effort, but still bent nowhere, and utterly without a purpose, though his dogged perseverance might have made it seem to one who watched him that he was walking away from death to life. That night he found another sheltering hay-stack, out of which he dragged enough hay to make room for his body. He lay down there, and pulled the surplus hay over him; and the racking of his rheumatic limbs and the pangs of an empty stomach kept him awake all night. Next day he sighted London, and went on with wearier and ever wearier feet in the profitless race against his own shadow, refusing at every step to know that he could go no farther.

In one of the outlying districts of London, an enterprising tradesman had lined the back of the window in which he displayed his goods with gorgeously panelled mirrors. The tramp came by in the sunshine and looked at the window. The tradesman stood at his own door and surveyed the sunlit street and the striped shop-blinds, and looked kindly on a thirsty dog which went to the waterman's bucket opposite. But observing that the human Pariah paused before his window, the tradesman turned and eyed him with suspicion. For his part, the tramp paused in perfect vacuity of mind, and in a mood so dreamy and unobservant, that he took the reflected image of himself for the actual solid body of some person standing in the shop. And being, as we have seen already, of a tender heart, he felt a dim pity stir within him at the sight of that melancholy spectacle. Stained with travel, ragged, bent, miserably shod, the creature standing there in the shop seemed deserving of pity. But as the tramp outside raised his head and moved his hand, an answering motion arrested his regard, and he saw in a second the trick his mind and eyes had played him. More than the third part of a year had gone by since he had consciously beheld the similitude of himself in a glass, and then he had seen a figure so different from this that his momentary failure to recognise himself need scarcely be regarded with surprise. He had been gay, and well dressed,

and young, and splendidly handsome five months ago; and now this human scarecrow, who looked so hungrily and mournfully back at him from the gold-bound mirror—this was he—this bowed and bent and broken wretch with the knotted black beard, gray-sprinkled, that flowed over his sunken breast, and the elf-locks with silver lines in them—himself and no other. And all this breaking in upon him, not as it is here set down, but like a lightning flash for swiftness and terribleness, he clasped his hands with one heart-rending groan, and his eyes grew so dim that the mirror and its reflection were blotted out of sight. At the sound of the groan the tradesman came off the door-step.

'What's the matter?'

The tramp turned his eyes upon him for one instant, and no more; and then with his hands drooping and clasped piteously before him, and his head bent downwards, he crawled on, dragging one foot after the other. The tradesman took a step in pursuit, and sent a thumb and finger into his own waistcoat-pocket, whence they returned with a shilling between them; and the man half-benevolent, half-suspicious in mood, sending one glance after the retreating figure and another over the way, saw his rival tradesman regarding the tramp and him with a smile of satiric humour. That decided him. He followed the pitiable figure, slipped the shilling into the clasped hands, and shot himself shamefacedly back into his own shop again. The tramp faltered in his walk, and looked down upon the coin. He turned slowly; but he could see no one in the street, and he did not know from whom the gift had come. 'Humiliated?' the tramp said to himself questioningly. 'What right have I to feel humiliated?' But he had been proud, and this first offer of charity was very bitter to him. The bread he ate tasted of charity, hungry and empty as he was, and his swelling throat almost refused it.

The streets grew fuller and busier as he neared the City; and the lights springing up in the thin dusk, and the roll of carts and cabs, and the hoarse murmur of the distant streets, were to him accustomed things, and full of remembrances. What had moved him back to London? He could not tell. How should he live there? Where bestow himself? He could not tell. At length he found himself on London Bridge. Was there any temptation there? Ay! The dirty stream that ran oilily about the wharves and the greasy mud-banks, and stole in such filthy smoothness round the boats that lay moored in mid-stream—vaguely seen past the lights that rose in the thin spring dusk—called to him with a voice which found a ready answer. But though one half his soul clamoured with an eager cry for the rest that lay there, he shook his head in answer to that inward call and muttered: 'No. That is the basest end of all. Let the close come how and when it may, I can't seek it wilfully.' And in answer to that resolved murmur, rose an inward voice of longing: 'Let the end come soon;' and he muttered again, shaking his gray sprinkled head: 'Amen to that. Let it come soon—let it come soon.' In this sorrowful case, still furtively munching the bitter bread of charity, and walking with his face bent downwards, shadowed by the drooping hat he wore and by his matted hair, he let his feet carry him whither they

would. He had wandered back to Holborn—for he had come up from the Western country—and the spring dusk had given way to night. A fretful wind teased itself with moanings until a close fine rain came down and stilled it. He was standing on the pavement facing Chancery Lane, when a private cab came by, rasping the kerbstone, and pulled up within three or four yards of him. 'Hold that there for me a minute, will you, mate?' said a whining voice in the tramp's ear; and before he knew it, he found himself holding a street-sweeper's broom. The owner of the broom had taken charge of the horse in the private cab; and the owner of the cab had swung himself out of it, and had gone with a hurried step along Warwick Court. The horse was restive, and insisted on going forward. The man who had assumed the charge of him was either unable to control, or unwilling to provoke the horse; and the cab was taken on slowly for perhaps a dozen yards, when it was brought to a stand behind a great wagon which blocked up that side of the way. Scarcely noting these things, the tramp stood at the kerbstone beneath a lamp-post, and directly at the head of the crossing, broom in hand. 'Hi, sweeper!' said a comfortable voice; and the tramp saw a gloved hand extended towards him. Mechanically he put out his own hand, and a sixpenny-piece dropped into it from the gloved thumb and finger. Then, by some unaccountable accident, another and another and another charitably disposed soul came by; and although the tramp solicited nothing—perhaps partly because of that—copper pieces were dropped one by one into his hand, until, when the sweeper came back to claim his broom, his locum tenens had something like two shillings waiting for him.

'Why, whatever's this?' cried the sweeper in amazement, as the tramp put the sixpence and the little pile of coppers in the hand held out for the broom.

'It is yours,' said the tramp. 'It was given to me as I stood in your place, and was meant for you of course.'

'Oh, I say, mate,' cried the sweeper, 'you are a real true good sort; and what extraordinary luck you do have, to be sure.' The sweeper was a thin and faded man, dressed in somebody's cast-off suit of black broadcloth. Somebody's suit had been highly respectable once upon a time, and was sunk into a deeper disgrace of seediness by reason of that old respectability. Some feeble attempt had been made to patch its looped and windowed raggedness; but little fragments of torn cloth shook at the man's shoulders and elbows and knees, and the skirts of his coat were vandyked with rags. The tramp had drooped his head again after one look at the sweeper, and had turned away; but the other followed him, and said, with a sort of reluctant haste: 'No; look here, mate; half of this ought to belong to you. No, sir; I'm poor, and I may have took to drink; but I've allays kep' my 'ed above water in the way of honesty, and I really couldn't. O dear, no—I really couldn't.'

'Are you so scrupulous?' asked the tramp, turning round upon him wearily.

'Which, speakin' fair and honest, sir,' the sweeper answered, 'I really am, sir. I couldn't do it. O dear, no—I really couldn't do it.' He counted the money with his shaky fingers, and

proffered half of it to the tramp, who only shook his head in answer.

'O please!' said the sweeper in his whining voice. 'Don't think me indelicate or over-pressin'; but I really couldn't keep it. I've seen better days, though I am a crossing-sweeper now; and I really couldn't demean myself to keep it.'

The tramp faced round again, and regarded him attentively. 'There is a spark of goodness here,' he thought; 'though not many would have suspected it. The man is thoroughly in earnest; and who am I of all men in the world that I should trample a good impulse down?' There came into his mind, as though a voice long silent had repeated them, these words: 'The bruised reed I will not break, the smoking flax I will not quench.' And that long-silent voice which whispered to his soul, seemed to lay a commandment on him. 'You will feel the want of this to-morrow,' said the tramp, as he held out his hand, and the sweeper placed the money, wet with the dismal rain, in his palm.

'Which we'll try to 'ope not, sir,' the other answered, and stopped before a flaring public-house. 'I haven't had a drop to-day,' he said, passing his hand across his mouth. 'Will you come in and take share of half a quartern?'

'No!' said the tramp with a little inward shudder.

'I beg your pardon,' said the other in his querulous whining tones, 'for asking you; but I've seen better days myself; and any one can see, sir, as you've not been used to this, sir, when you speak.'

'Can you tell me where I can get lodgings for the night?' asked the tramp, ignoring the dubious compliment. 'I am very poor. I had only tenpence when you shared with me.'

'If you'll only wait for me half a minute,' returned the sweeper, 'I'll take you to as good a place as there is. It isn't far, sir, and I'm going there myself.'

Receiving a nod of assent, he shambled into the gin-shop; and after a pause of a minute, came shambling out again, rubbing the back of his hand relishingly across his bristly lips. He led his companion along Holborn and into Oxford Street, and crossing the road with a brief injunction to the tramp to follow, went down a dark and noisome passage which led into a court-yard. At the far end of the court burned one oil-lamp, a feeble blur of light on the darkness. 'A good many of the steps is broken,' said the sweeper; 'and you'll have to feel along the wall, because the balusters has been broke up for firewood; and with this caution, he preceded the stranger once more; and with now and then a warning word, made needful by the unsafeness and darkness of the way, led right to the top of the building. 'Wait there while I get a light,' said the tramp's guide, speaking out of dense darkness. The tramp stood still, and heard him prowling cautiously about the floor, sliding his feet before him, as if afraid to set them firmly down. After a while, the man struck a light, and found a candle; and then called the other to him. 'Step cautious,' he cried; 'you ain't used to the place, and there's a-many holes about.' The tramp not heeding this warning greatly, crossed the creaking floor, and in the dim light of the candle looked about the room in which he found himself. It was absolutely bare of

furniture, and held nothing, so far as he could see, but three tea-chests, a heap of shavings, and some ragged sacks.

'I haven't got a lock to the room,' said the sweeper, still whining, as though he was beseeching charity; 'and when I'm in luck, and I've got a bit of firing, Mrs Closky she keeps it for me in her place down-stairs.—Sit down here, sir,' he continued, placing one of the tea-chests bottom upwards, 'and I'll see about a fire.' Leaving his guest in the dark, he went down-stairs; and the tramp heard the murmur of conversation in the room below. He leaned his bearded chin upon his hands, and looked before him at the scenes which memory and fancy threw upon the black canvas of the night. They were many, and some of them were glad, but not one of them had any other lesson than despair for him. And suddenly, with no wish or conscious thought of his to bring them, the bridge and the river were before him, with dim blots of light upon the bridge against the thin spring dusk, and brightly scintillating sparks in the distance where the filthy stream went out of sight beneath the curtain of the gathering dark. And his whole soul yearned after the rest which lay within the bosom of the river, till he set his teeth and gripped his beard hard with both hands, and muttered to himself: 'Not that—not that. The coward's way. The meanest end of all. Not that, in God's name!' The slimy stream with its twinkling lights faded out of fancy's gaze; and the sweeper came stumbling up the broken stairs with the candle in his hand, and a lean sack thrown over his shoulder. Tumbling out a few handfuls of coal and wood upon the floor, he knelt down at the grate, and built up carefully the materials for a fire.

'Is this your own place?' asked the tramp, glad to turn his thoughts into any current but that in which they chose to run.

'Yes,' said the sweeper. 'It comes as cheap as Flight's Place; and I've been well to do in my time; and I can't abear the thoughts of mixing up along of them low riff-raff. Which that's what they are, I know right well, sir—the very lowest of the very low.'

'What is Flight's Place?' the tramp asked.

'It's a thieves' kitchen—nothing better, sir,' answered the sweeper, fanning the fire with his hat, 'close by where I had the pleasure of meeting you, sir.'

'Ay?' said the tramp.

'Not as I'd say,' the sweeper continued, 'as Bolter's Rents was ezactly the kind of place as a man might care for to live in which had been well reared. But it's very quiet and retired-like, when you're at the top; and since the time when my poor wife died—my pardner-in-life which she is dead and gorn, sir—there ain't been one creetur in this room but me. That is, not except Dr Brand.'

'Dr Brand of Wimpole Street?'

'That's the same gentleman. Do you know him?' asked the sweeper.

'No,' said the tramp; 'but I have heard of him.'

'I daresay now, sir,' said the sweeper, leaving his place at the fire, which now burned brightly, and dragging one of the empty tea-chests before it, 'as you'd wonder what brought a gentleman like Dr Brand to think of coming here, sir?'

'What brought him here?' the tramp returned, trying to feel some interest in the other's chatter, and to shut out the thoughts which beat at the door of his own mind.

'Why,' said the sweeper, spreading his hands before the blaze, and basking in it, but speaking always in the same whining tones, 'me and my poor pardner which is gorn, meaning my wife, sir, kep' a stationer's shop, with a license for tobacco, close up against where Dr Brand formerly used for to live when he was younger in practice. An' he used to deal with us, which he put a deal of money in my way, and brought a lot of custom. Which when I'd been in business nine or ten 'ear, sir, I'd saved a bit of money; and I thought I'd venture for to enlarge the trade. And—— Ah!' broke out the sweeper, shaking his head dismally at the fire, 'what a fool I were for certain! I went to a man as had a office in Long Lane, which his name was Mister A. Tasker'——

A light shone suddenly in the tramp's dull eyes, and he lifted his head and looked in the speaker's face. His own countenance flushed crimson, and then paled again. He dropped his chin slowly upon his breast, and took his beard with both hands. The sweeper went on, noting nothing of his companion's agitation.

'And I borrowed more money off of him; and that was what broke me up; for he followed me that hard, and he did that persecute me. If you'll believe me, sir, I paid him four or five times over, which I shouldn't be surprised if I paid him six. And finally he came and sold me up.'

'Ay!' said the tramp. 'A blood-sucker.'

'Oh, you may well say that, sir,' cried his host, and maundered on again. But the tramp had fallen into a reverie, in which the other's words fell idly on his ear. He came out of his dream in time to hear the statement that *that* was what the sweeper called a judgment; and he in answer nodded and said 'Ay!' But he had missed a story which might have been of interest to him had he heard it. It was no other than the tale of Mr Tasker's fall as related in court three days before by the counsel who appeared against Closky.

The sweeper saw something of the tramp's pre-occupation, and forbore to speak further; but rising began to arrange for him a bed of shavings, and to apportion the sacks which were to cover him. The self-absorbed man took no notice of his movements, and was indeed by this time unconscious of his presence. The host went down-stairs again, taking the candle with him; and returning by-and-by with two rough and ragged blankets, threw one upon each of his improvised couches, and touched the tramp upon the shoulder, saying that he might go to bed when he would.

'What do you pay for this place?' asked the tramp, without turning round.

'I pay one-and-ninapence a week for it,' returned the sweeper. 'That's just threepence a night, you see. It comes as cheap as a lodging-house, and I have it to my own self.'

'Will you take me as a lodger for a week if I share the payment with you?' asked the tramp, bending above the scanty embers of the fire. 'I am tired, and I must rest for a day or two.'

'You can stay here and welcome,' whined the sweeper. 'I don't want nothink from a man as is poor and honest, like myself.'

'I will not stay unless you let me pay,' said the tramp.

'Very well,' said the other. 'It ain't my fault if I take the money. I don't ask for none. Mind that, sir.'

'There's tenpence-halfpenny, and I am your lodger for a week. Is that agreed?'

'That's agreed,' said the sweeper; and the new lodger cast himself wearily down upon the sacks and shavings, and drew the tattered blanket over him. The sweeper as he arranged his own bed to his mind, offered two or three remarks to his companion; but receiving no answer, lay down, curled himself up in his blanket, and fell fast asleep.

And it was in this wise that Frank Fairholt became a lodger in Bolter's Rents.

### SOME SCIENTIFIC HOAXES.

It is not a little curious that men of science, notwithstanding their devotion to truth and critical examination of evidence, are so apt to be imposed upon by deceptions got up in their own particular study. Perhaps it is because they are disposed to confide in the honesty of others, and also that their enthusiasm carries them away and gets the better of their circumspection.

The most touching of all the scientific hoaxes with which we are acquainted was perpetrated in the eighteenth century. Although the ancients had again and again dug up fossils of animals, shells, and plants in excavating the ground and quarrying the rocks, they were very long in finding out their true nature. Some philosophers attributed them to a formative force in nature which moulded them as they were; some considered that the Creator had shaped them for some inexplicable reason; and latterly we find it generally held that they were either freaks of nature or relics of the Flood. These views especially prevailed with John Bartholomew Adam Beringer, a Professor at the University of Würzburg, who, in accordance with them, instructed his pupils that fossil remains or 'figured stones,' as they were called, were mere 'sports of nature.' Now, some of his mischievous young students were of opinion that they, as well as nature, might have some sport in making figure-stones; and accordingly they set to work and carved many curious and fantastic forms out of the soft limestone rock of the neighbouring hills, and buried them in the localities where the Professor was accustomed to dig for his fossil treasures. 'His delight at the discovery of these strange forms,' says Professor O. C. Marsh, the celebrated American geologist, 'encouraged further production, and taxed the ingenuity of these youthful imitators of nature's secret processes. At last Beringer had a large and unique collection of forms, new to him and to science, which he determined to publish to the world. After long and patient study, his work appeared in Latin, dedicated to the reigning Prince of the country, and illustrated with twenty-one folio plates. Soon after the book was published, the deception practised upon the credulous Professor became known; and in place of the glory he expected from his great undertaking, he encountered only ridicule and disgrace. He at once

endeavoured to repurchase and destroy the volumes already issued, and succeeded so far, that few copies of the first edition remain. His small fortune, which had been seriously impaired in bringing out his grand work, was exhausted in an effort to regain what was already issued, as the price rapidly advanced in proportion as fewer copies remained. He died in poverty, mortified at the failure of his life's work. It is said that some of his family, dissatisfied with the misfortune brought upon them by this disgrace and the loss of their patrimony, used a remaining copy for the production of a second edition, which met with a large sale, sufficient to repair the previous loss, and restore the family fortune! This work of Beringer's, in the end, exerted an excellent influence upon the dawning science of fossil remains. Observers became more cautious in announcing supposed discoveries, and careful study of natural objects gradually replaced vague hypotheses.'

We are here reminded of an anecdote which is related of a certain Edinburgh Professor of natural history who was engaged in delivering a course of lectures on Geology, but which had a result different from what was anticipated. One day a chosen band of his students acquired possession of a brickbat, which they painted a variety of specious hues, and placed amongst the other fossils and rocks on which their master was to discourse. The Professor illustrated his lecture by reference to the specimens before him on the table, saying, for example, as he went on: 'This is a piece of volcanic trap-rock,' or 'This is a piece of granite.' At length he came to the mysterious stranger with the gaudy livery, and after taking it up in his hands and examining it attentively for a few moments, he proceeded: 'And gentlemen, this is, I am sorry to say, a piece of foolishness.'

The cases of scientific imposition which we have thus far cited had at least a harmless intent; but there are instances of others which were either conceived in recklessness or malice. The figure of Newton in the scientific imagination is only comparable to that of Shakspeare in poetry; and his extraordinary fame chiefly rests on his grand discovery of the law of universal gravitation. To take away this from his credit would be like proving that *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and the *Merchant of Venice* were purloined by Shakspeare from some other pen. Nevertheless this is precisely what was attempted some years ago by a learned member of the French Academy of Sciences, M. Chasles, who must not be confounded with M. Philartès Chasles. Chasles declared that Newton had pilfered his discovery from an older source, and the news fell upon the scientific world like a bombshell. To prove his assertions, M. Chasles produced a show of faded yellow manuscripts, purporting to be letters from Pascal to Sir Isaac, containing the germ of the great idea. The documents were plainly ancient, for the ink had been tested by chemical means; it was remarked, however, that the style of French in which they were written did not agree with the date alleged. The letters and other documents produced by M. Chasles at the same time were said to have belonged to the Abbey of Tours. Thence they came into the possession of a certain Count de Boisjournain, who emigrated to America in 1791, and was wrecked on his return, losing all his effects, except



his precious manuscripts, which he ultimately sold to keep himself in bread. From the hands of the Count the said documents passed into the keeping of him who gave them in turn to M. Chasles.

Such was the story; and to the acute objections of Mr Brand of Glasgow, Chasles audaciously produced another letter from Galileo, which proved that Pascal had made known his discoveries to him. This letter was dated 1640; and on its being pointed out that Galileo was struck blind in 1638, M. Chasles, nothing daunted, met his critics again with a letter from Galileo to Pascal, in which he warned his 'young friend' not to betray the secret that he had *not* lost his sight as reported, but had only pretended to have lost it, in order to prevent his enemies from persecuting him. There was no combating this unequivocal evidence, and the *savants* of the Academy admitted that M. Chasles had triumphed, and deserved well of posterity for proclaiming the truth. Thus encouraged, M. Chasles became a mine of antiquarian wealth, and shewed letters from most of the famous men and women of old times, both saints and sinners, all in French of the seventeenth century. Amongst these he exhibited a correspondence from Alexander the Great to Aristides, several notes from Attila the Hun, and the widow of Martin Luther; and sundry communications from Judas Iscariot to Mary Magdalene, and from Lazarus to St Peter! These astounding documents were produced by M. Chasles with such an air of perfect good faith, that it was impossible to doubt him. He stated that he had purchased twenty-seven thousand manuscripts for five thousand pounds, but would not betray the source, lest others should share in it. At last the exposure came in spite of M. Chasles, who turned out to be a miserable dupe. A committee was sent to Florence to inquire into the authenticity of a pretended autograph of Galileo, and on its being judged apocryphal, the materials of the fraud were discovered. The forger was an ill-educated fellow named Vrain Lucas, a native of Chartres, who was taken, tried, and severely punished.

Coming now to more recent times, we find that an interesting case of unmitigated hoax in a matter of pure science, was perpetrated on the English chemical world in 1865. In the number of the *Mechanic's Magazine* for March 3, 1865, there appeared a letter signed Walter Power, the Royal School of Mines, announcing that the celebrated German physicist Schönbein, the discoverer of ozone, had succeeded in decomposing the element oxygen into two components, ozone and antiozone, by means of the *negative* spark from an electric machine; the positive spark again effecting their combination into oxygen. A few days later a paragraph appeared in the *Chemical News*, characterising the alleged Schönbein's result as being without doubt the greatest chemical discovery ever made, and promising the original memoir as soon as it could be got from Munich. The French Association also heard of the rumour, and forthwith invited Schönbein to come to Paris and exhibit his experiments to the wondering gaze of the Parisian *savants*. To the disappointment of all, however, an answer came from Schönbein denying that he had ever made such a discovery; though he had been engaged over thirty years in investigating the nature of oxygen, and had been led to *infer* that it was composed of ozone

and antiozone. That the original notice was a wilful hoax, could be proved by the wording of the letter and the spurious references given, even if it had not since been confessed as such by the writer; and it is instructive to see how even skilled chemists were hoodwinked by it.

America is proverbially the land of that kind of illusion or deception in scientific matters which is perhaps best understood by the term 'mare's-nest.' The Americans are eagerly bent upon discovery, and the temptation to run into 'mares'-nests' unwittingly, or even to perpetrate a veritable fraud for the sake of notoriety or gain, is unfortunately powerful amongst them. When the famous Mr Edison began his remarkable career as an inventor, he announced to the world one day that he had discovered a new physical force which he named 'Ethereic Force.' The force did not appear to be electrical, since even the most delicate galvanometer or electric current detector failed to note its presence; nevertheless it was produced by means of electricity, and like electricity could generate a brilliant light. Mr Edison was to do wonders with it, revolutionise telegraphy, and turn the world topsyturvy; but serious investigation by a man of science who knew more about electric science than the daring young telegraph operator, soon demonstrated that the mysterious power was nothing more than what is known as the 'extra spark.'

A notorious deception practised on the American public three years ago was the 'Keely Motor,' which, according to Mr Keely the inventor, was also based on a new force he had discovered by accident. His machine consisted in utilising this force, which could be generated from water vapour; and Mr Keely, who modestly disclaimed any merit in his invention, declared that he could work his machine up to ten thousand horse-power if the metal would bear it. The small model machine which he exhibited consisted of an elaborate array of wrought-iron, cast-steel, and copper, tubes, balls, and basins, which defied all understanding. It was stated to utilise only a quart of water at a time, and from that a thousand horse-power of energy could be generated for a time sufficient to run a steam-ship across the Atlantic. A joint-stock company was formed to work the concern, and the shares went up to an extraordinary premium. One of the directors said: 'We have been laughed at, and called cheats and impostors; but out of the original company who joined in raising the one hundred and twenty thousand dollars already expended upon this occasion, only three or four have withdrawn. In a month or two now, all Mr Keely's tests will be finished, and we will shew the world whether he is the greatest inventor or the greatest humbug of this age. Scientists, machinists, and learned societies are invited to come and make every test they can think of.' At last the knavery was exploded. Professors Marks and Barker of the University of Pennsylvania were invited to test the apparatus, and observing that a heavy iron tube was connected to the machine just before it began to operate, they discovered that this tube was in reality a secret store of compressed air.

About this time the American scientific periodicals were exceedingly rich in wonderful new motors and new forces. Just as Mr Keely announced that a little water could be made to

furnish him with an incredible amount of physical force, several magnetic motors were trumpeted forth to public notice, notably those of Mr Gary and Miss Hosmer. Gary's motor was based on his discovery of a substance, which, when placed between a magnet and a piece of iron, destroyed the attraction between them. The new machine was patented, as also was that of Miss Hosmer, a young lady artist, resident in Rome. The latter contrivance was to furnish its possessor with a source of perpetual motion by the expenditure of a few pence; but, like all the rest, it was ultimately shewn to be a delusion.

Another American notion of a rather dangerous kind was exposed only a few months ago. It appears that a certain Professor Wingard claimed to be the inventor of an apparatus with which he could destroy a vessel at a distance of five miles. This would, he reasonably said, put a stop to all naval warfare, since anybody in possession of his secret would be able to shatter a hostile fleet into nothingness without getting within range of its guns. Two years ago he gave a public exhibition of his plan at New Orleans, in presence of many scientific men. The hulk of a schooner was blown by him into atoms from a small boat which was rowed within about a mile of the hulk. As to the nature of this awful force, the Professor could only say that it was electricity, that scapegoat for all inexplicable phenomena, and that it was applied without any direct connection between the machine and the object to be destroyed. He appeared again at Boston last summer, formed a stock company, and got one thousand eight hundred dollars for a preliminary experiment. A little steamer was obtained, and in a dark house on its deck, with careful privacy, Wingard arranged a great quantity of mysterious apparatus. On the day appointed for the test, one day last November, an old vessel was towed to a safe point in the bay, and the steamer was stationed a mile away. Suddenly there was an explosion at a considerable distance from each craft; and afterwards the wreck of a row-boat, with two mangled human bodies, was found at the spot. Wingard, greatly agitated, said that his experiment could not be carried out that day; and he has since confessed that the trick used at New Orleans, and about to be repeated at Boston, was to explode a large dynamite torpedo under the vessel by means of a rope running to the pretended electric apparatus. The two unfortunate men were on their way to put the torpedo in its place when an accidental explosion caused their death.

## A CONSPIRATOR IN SPITE OF MYSELF.

### CHAPTER II.

#### MYSTERY (CONTINUED).

THE stranger placed the purse in the *padrone's* hand.

'Yet stay, Monsieur,' said Gustave, before he transferred the purse to his pocket. 'I claim the right to draw back, and to return this purse and its contents to you, if I disapprove of the service I am asked to render.'

'Be it so, *padrone*; but there will be no occasion,' answered the Italian. 'But the night progresses. It is now near midnight; and the service I seek from you must be rendered ere daybreak,

if it is to prove successful. There is therefore no time to lose. Will you enter the boat with me? We must hasten on shore.'

Gustave started back in alarm. He had thought that he would be required to proceed somewhere with his vessel, and he did not like the idea of trusting himself on shore at such a time alone with the Italians.

'You wish me to go on shore with you, Monsieur?' he said. 'I cannot consent. I did not arrange for that.'

The stranger appeared much annoyed. 'I do not wish you to go with me alone,' he replied. 'One of your people will accompany you—one in whose discretion you can place trust.'

The Italian, while he was conversing, had glanced several times at me; and though I was attired in a fisherman's garb, I presented a very different appearance from the toilworn, weather-beaten crew of the lugger. 'You, Monsieur, are not one of this vessel's crew?' he asked abruptly.

'No, Monsieur,' I replied.

'What then are you? An Englishman, I presume?'

'I am an Englishman,' I replied.

'I thought as much. But what do you, an Englishman, and evidently not a fisherman, on board a French fishing-vessel?'

'You have no right to question me, Monsieur,' I replied. 'But there is no reason why I should desire to conceal anything from you, and I will answer you truly. I am an officer of the British navy;' and as briefly as possible, I explained how it came about that I was now on board a French fishing-lugger.

'An Englishman and a naval officer,' murmured the Italian musingly, as if to himself. Then addressing me, he went on: 'As a British officer, Monsieur, I may trust implicitly to your honour. Besides, you English are foes to tyranny and oppression, whether on the part of a vile mob or their legitimate rulers. May I ask if you will accompany the *padrone* to the shore?'

'Recollect, Monsieur,' I replied, 'that by assenting to what you propose I may get into trouble—perhaps into disgrace with my superior officers.'

'I will guarantee that if you follow the directions you will receive, nothing of that kind will happen,' the Italian replied. 'Moreover, you will render a service to one in great distress, that you will afterwards be proud of.'

To tell the truth, I was only too willing to go on shore with the *padrone*. Such an adventure presented a strong attraction to a young midshipman of eighteen years; and as Gustave Pailleur seemed to wish that I should be his companion to the shore, rather than one of his own crew, I gladly consented. 'At all events,' I thought to myself, 'it will be something to boast of to my messmates of the gunroom, when the frigate returns to Toulon.'

'You will promise, Signore,' said I, 'that we shall not be detained on shore? And I should be better satisfied if you would give me some idea of the nature of the service you require from the *padrone* and myself.'

'Monsieur, I will guarantee will return to the lugger before daylight dawns,' replied the Italian. 'As to the nature of the service required, I can only repeat that it is one in which all who engage will have reason to be proud.'

I hesitated no longer. The *padrone* called up his crew, and informed the men that he was going on shore on important business, and bade them keep a sharp look-out, and admit no strangers on board. Also, at the request of the Italian officer, he ordered his mate to have everything prepared for the immediate departure of the vessel from the Gulf, should such a course be necessary.

We then—that is, the *padrone* and I and the Italian officer—entered the boat, which was immediately pulled away from the lugger. And now I perceived that the boat's oars were muffled, in order that the rowers should make as little noise as possible.

Opposite the spot where the *Belle Jeannette* lay at anchor, and at the distance of perhaps a mile, was a small town or village, near which the other small vessels that were in the Gulf lay moored. We pulled steadily towards this spot until we were quite out of sight of the sloop-of-war that, as I have mentioned, lay at anchor behind the Cape; and then we altered our course, and proceeded towards a portion of the coast, on the opposite side of the Gulf, on which a dense wood extended to the very verge of the beach. In a quarter of an hour or less we had landed, in as solitary a spot, seen at the hour of midnight, as it is possible to conceive.

'You will please to follow me, my friends,' said the Italian officer, as soon as we had landed, having previously ordered the two boatmen to pull a short distance off shore and to watchfully await our return.

'We have a distance to walk through the wood,' he added, addressing us, 'but not far. Meanwhile, do not converse, but walk quietly, making as little noise as possible.'

In about ten minutes we emerged from the wood, and found ourselves at the gate of what appeared to be an extensive park. A slight tap at the gate led to its being opened by a porter, who had evidently been expecting us.

'Close the gate, Luigi,' said the officer to the porter, in Italian; and then addressing us in French, he added: 'In a few minutes, Messieurs, we shall arrive at the palace. Then all that will be required from you will be to obey such orders as you may receive without demur and without asking questions. Trust to my word that your personal safety will be in no respect imperilled.'

A few minutes more, and we saw before us a large and handsome *palazzo*, surrounded by a balcony, and by pleasure-grounds evidently cultivated in high perfection. It was yet early in the spring; but in that southern climate the weather was delightful, and the flowers already in bloom filled the atmosphere with a delicious perfume. We now entered a lofty and spacious hall, in which were several officers in brilliant uniforms, who were conversing earnestly together. They saluted with great respect the young officer whom we accompanied, and then stood silently and anxiously watching us, as we ascended a wide stone staircase, until we reached an antechamber, which formed one of a numerous suite of apartments, as we could perceive through the doors which stood open. An elderly gray-haired officer, whose breast was covered with stars and orders, now approached us from one of the inner apartments, and conversed in whispers for some moments with our youthful conductor, who then

addressing us, said: 'You *padrone*, and you also Monsieur, must now consent to be blindfolded. Fear nothing. No harm will happen to you. For my part, I would trust to your honour; but Monsieur le Duc insists that it is advisable—in case of your being hereafter questioned—that you should be kept in ignorance concerning the short journey you are about to undertake.'

This was more than we had bargained for; and we began to expostulate against such an indignity.

'*Silenzio!*' said the elderly officer sternly; and as he spoke, the entrance into the room of four armed soldiers, one of whom carried the silk handkerchiefs with which our eyes were to be bound, convinced us that any attempt at resistance would be worse than useless.

The young officer, whom the elder addressed as *Altezza* or Highness, took one of the handkerchiefs from the soldier, and proceeded to bind my eyes himself; while the soldier was left to bind those of the *padrone*.

'Be calm, Monsieur, and submit patiently,' the young officer whispered in my ear. 'You will have but a few miles to travel, and then the bandages will be removed from your eyes. Then do as you are directed without question, and all will be well.'

Our eyes having been so carefully bound that we, or I at least, could scarce perceive the difference between the brilliantly lighted *salon* and the darkness that existed without, were led by two soldiers into what appeared to be a court-yard, and assisted into what we supposed to be one of the common carts of the country. I knew by the sound of the wheels that there was at least one other cart or wagon in the court-yard; but for what it was required, of course I had no means of knowing. We were seated on some straw at the bottom of the cart, and ordered to keep perfectly silent; and in a few minutes the carts were in motion. But before they started, we were again ordered to remain perfectly quiet, on peril of our lives. We obeyed for the time being; but when in a few moments the vehicles were driven out of the court-yard, we were able to converse in whispers—the rumbling of the wheels over apparently uneven ground, preventing our conversation from being audible to our guards. So far as I could ascertain—by the sound only—there were two vehicles—common carts, drawn by oxen, such as are used by the Calabrian peasantry; that in which we were placed, and probably the other likewise, containing firearms and gunpowder concealed beneath the straw. At all events, I could feel what I took to be muskets and pistols stowed near me in the bottom of the cart, and also several small kegs, which I naturally supposed to contain gunpowder.

In piteous whispers, poor Gustave Paillieur expressed his regret that he had been tempted to leave his vessel. He declared that he was sure that we should come to grief before our journey came to an end, and declared that he would give up—if he had it to give—ten times the amount of the earnest-money he had received, to be safe on board again; while I on my part placed little faith in the young Italian officer's assurance that no harm should befall us if we obeyed the orders we should receive. That we should be safe enough, if nothing occurred to prevent the object

for which we had been persuaded to trust ourselves on shore—of the nature of which I could form no conception—from being carried into effect, I had little doubt; but the evident anxiety of the Italian officers, the precautions taken to preserve secrecy, and the vigilance of the soldiers who accompanied the vehicles, betrayed the fact that they were not without fears that the journey would be interrupted by an attack from some one of the numerous bands of insurgents that were said to be in existence in all parts of the country. More than once we heard the distant report of musketry, and once the firing was sufficiently near to create alarm. The carts were stopped, while the soldiers conversed in low tones of voice; and were then, after a brief delay, turned aside into a road or lane, in a more wretched condition—as we soon discovered from the fearful jolting, which threatened to dislocate every bone in our bodies—than that, rough and uneven as it was, over which we had already passed.

Still I cannot say that I felt much fear. I knew that if the soldiers were attacked, we ran the risk of being hit by a chance shot; but to a lad of eighteen years there was a charm in the adventure that overpowered all other feelings. 'If the assailants should be the victors,' I thought to myself, 'as they probably will be, for they will not venture to attack the convoy unless in overwhelming numbers, they will perceive that we are captives; and though we may have to suffer some hardships and may be exposed to subsequent peril, they will do us no injury;' and if it had been in my power to transport myself safely back on board the lugger—so eager was I to witness the termination of the adventure—I believe I should have declined to avail myself of that power.

I strove to impart some of my feeling of confidence to my older companion, but to no purpose.

'Neither party,' said I, 'would dare to maltreat an Englishman, especially a British officer; and the people believe that the English wish them success in their endeavours to escape from the tyranny of their oppressors. Rest assured that no harm will come to us'—

'Ah, Monsieur,' said poor Gustave, 'but I am a Frenchman, and the Italians hate the French.'

'They will not dare to harm you,' I replied. 'Under any circumstances, they will not offer to wreak their vengeance upon a harmless fisherman!'

But the poor *padrone* refused to be comforted, and started and trembled at every sound he heard. His fears, however, proved happily to be groundless.

Lying blindfolded at the bottom of a jolting cart, the journey seemed to have occupied hours; but, as I afterwards perceived, an hour could scarcely have elapsed from the time we set forth until we drew up in what I imagined to be a paved court-yard, similar to that from which we had started. In a few moments we were assisted from the cart, and conducted each, as before, by a soldier, up a long flight of stone steps, into what I supposed to be either a prison or another *palazzo*. We were then led through room after room—a hum of voices resounding on each hand as we passed along, until our conductors let go our hands and left us standing, apparently in the

centre of an apartment occupied by several people. I do not know whether the young Italian officer had accompanied the carts, or whether he had preceded them by some other route; but it was he who now approached and removed the bandages from our eyes.

'You perceive, Monsieur, I am here before you,' he said smilingly; and I knew the voice, although I did not immediately recognise the man, for my eyes, so long in darkness, were dazzled by the brilliancy with which the apartment in which I now stood was illuminated. It was no prison, as I had anticipated, to which we were now introduced, but a *palazzo* of greater magnificence than that which we had lately quitted.

The young officer appeared to be amused by my evident amazement and bewilderment; but he left me without another word, and I had leisure to look around me. The room, which was splendidly furnished, and was made to appear fourfold its actual dimensions by the immense plate-glass mirrors which covered the walls, and reflected every object on every hand, was occupied by several persons, some of whom were in uniform; while others, who appeared to mingle with them on terms of perfect equality, were attired as artisans or peasants; and I remarked that among the occupants of the brilliant *salon* there were three or four priests in their clerical robes. I could hardly believe my eyes. I almost fancied that I was dreaming, or was under the influence of some magic spell! It was as if a page of the *Arabian Nights* were suddenly realised. As for the poor *padrone*, he was half stupefied between wonder and terror. He crossed himself, and his lips moved in prayer to his guardian saint, as he gazed with a bewildered air at the splendour by which he was surrounded.

In a few minutes, the same aged officer who had been addressed as Monsieur le Duc approached me. 'You are English? An English naval officer?' he said, addressing me sternly, but in very imperfect French.

'I am, Signore,' I replied.

He looked intently at me, as if doubtful whether I spoke the truth, but at length appeared to be satisfied.

'And you?' he continued, addressing the *padrone*.

'A poor humble fisherman of Toulon, Highness, who has never willingly wronged any person,' replied Gustave.

'Your vessel is in the Gulf?'

'It is, Excellency.'

'And prepared to put to sea at a moment's warning?'

'Yes, Highness.'

'It is well, my friends,' said the officer. Then pointing to a soldier who had followed him into the room, carrying a bundle under his arm, he added: 'You will now, Messieurs, have the complaisance to divest yourselves of your fishermen's attire, and don the garments which this soldier carries. He will conduct you to an antechamber for that purpose.—See to this, Signor Capitano,' he went on, addressing an officer who stood near him; 'and be diligent. It is almost the hour.'

The officer motioned to us to follow him; and accompanied by the soldier, we passed through several apartments, into an anteroom in which half-a-dozen youths, attired as pages, were idly



lounging about. The soldier untied his bundle, and displayed to my wondering eyes two suits of regimentals such as were worn by the Italian infantry.

The officer, who could not speak French, motioned to us to strip ourselves of the garments we wore and don the regimentals. The idle youths who were in the room, attracted by curiosity, arose from their lounging postures and gathered round us, smiling and whispering to one another. To refuse to obey the order would have been folly. Still I hesitated to divest myself of my clothing before strangers; and the officer divining the cause of my hesitation, spoke to the soldier, and pointed to a closet at the end of the room. The soldier beckoned to us to follow him into the closet, where, after we had divested ourselves of our coarse fishermen's garb, he assisted us to attire ourselves in the regimentals, to which we were quite unused. We were then conducted back to the apartment we had recently quitted; where we found the officer who had visited the lugger, awaiting our return.

He looked earnestly at us, and seemed to be satisfied with our appearance. 'They will do. They will pass amidst the darkness,' he observed to the soldier; and then addressing us in French, he said: 'Now, be seated, my friends. Be silent and discreet, and no harm will befall you.'

We obeyed silently and mechanically, as if we were a pair of automatons moved by strings and pulleys; for by this time I at least began to feel as if I were without a will of my own. In a few minutes the folding-doors at the upper end of the saloon were thrown wide open, and two young boyish-looking officers—preceded by a couple of tall footmen in rich liveries—made their appearance. These two young men, though they wore the plain undress uniform of subalterns of the line, and though they appeared so shy and timid, that one, the younger of the two, seemed ready to faint, were received with every mark of respect and homage. The footmen, who had stopped—one on each side of the folding-doors—turned about and bowed low as they entered the room; and the officers and other persons present who were seated, rose to their feet, the padrone and I rising, as it were mechanically, with the rest; while the aged officer who had questioned us on our first appearance, approached the youth who seemed to be so much overcome, and respectfully offering him the support of his arm, whispered what appeared to be words of encouragement in his ear, and led him to a sofa with as much courtesy as he could have displayed had he been conducting a queen to her throne.

#### BURNHAM BEECHES.

In June of last year there appeared an advertisement in the London papers of the sale of 'portions of the Dropmore estate,' in which was included what were described in capital letters as 'THE CELEBRATED BURNHAM BEECHES.' Among others who read this advertisement was Mr Francis George Heath, the well-known author of more than one delightful book on trees and ferns; and he, knowing and appreciating the beauty of the woodland of Burnham Beeches, and considering

its proximity to London, at once set about calling public attention to the sale, urging the desirability of securing the property, to be preserved for all time coming as a place of popular resort. He left no stone unturned to effect his purpose. He communicated with the Commissioners of Woods and Forests; but that body found it was a project they could not entertain. The Corporation of the City of London was next appealed to, and with success; the result being that the three hundred and seventy-four acres of common or open ground on which the Beeches stood became the property of the Corporation. Mr Heath thus laid the public under a deep debt of gratitude to him, by securing that this magnificent piece of forest should not only be saved from falling under the axe of the speculator, but should be appropriated and perpetually maintained as common ground, to which the pent-up millions of the great metropolis may freely resort to breathe the invigorating air of the country, and to see Nature in some of her most beautiful forms. And now, in addition to his other labours in this connection, Mr Heath has written a very pleasant little book on the subject—*Burnham Beeches* (London: Sampson Low)—which will not only serve as a guide to those who have the pleasure of visiting the Beeches, but embodies within it much interesting information as to the trees themselves. It is from the pen of one who evidently loves trees as Byron loved mountains; and the fine pictorial illustrations with which the descriptions are accompanied greatly enhance the charm which every reader is certain to experience over its pages.

Burnham is situated within twenty-five miles of London, and between five and six from Windsor. It is accessible by the Great Western Railway, the Beeches being within three and a half miles of the station of Slough on that line. Burnham also has other associations of an interesting kind. 'It was the poet Gray,' says Mr Heath, 'who first, in the early part of the last century, called attention to the secluded, unique, and beautiful, but comparatively unknown, bit of wild woodland in Buckinghamshire left stranded, as it were, by the rolling sea of forest which once spread around it, but has now—almost all—gone for ever.' The Beeches became known to the world on the publication of the poet's letters; and so identified is the district with recollections of him, that Mr Heath makes bold to point out the very beech-tree by the brook under which the poet mused, as described in the *Elegy*—

Yonder nodding beech  
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high.

Whether this be so or not, may very well be left to the individual imaginations of the poet's admirers, who, however, have ample means of gratifying their tastes in this direction if, in walking from Slough to Burnham, they take Stoke Pogis on their way, where Gray himself is buried, and with the church and churchyard of which place the locality of his *Elegy* has been so long

identified. Burnham has still other associations of a literary kind, for here stands East Burnham Cottage, the house, since enlarged, to which Richard Brinsley Sheridan brought the lovely young bride whom he first ran away with and then fought for. This house was in 1838 bought by George Grote, and in it he wrote a large part of his *History of Greece*.

Reverting to the Beeches, it may be well to let Mr Heath describe them: 'The Beeches of Burnham,' he says, 'have been described as "magnificent pollards." The description is not quite an accurate one. That these singularly picturesque trees were "pollarded" at some remote period of their history is certainly beyond question. But they can scarcely be called "pollards;" for that expression is used to indicate trees whose limbs have been cut off close to their trunks, leaving nothing to grow but a mass of slender boughs—if boughs there may be without branches—and of small twigs—if twigs there can be without boughs. But from the once—"pollarded" giants of Burnham have grown huge limbs like large trees.' These Beeches are many of them of an immense size. The bole of the one which Mr Heath seeks to recognise as the 'nodding beech' of Gray, and which stands near the southern entrance to the forest, is quite hollow, with half of its shell gone; yet the half-bole that remains is sixteen feet in girth, and carries singularly vigorous branches. Another beech, also with part of the shell gone, must have had when complete a girth of twenty-four feet; and there is in the same spot another beech of twenty-one feet girth. Beyond this, says Mr Heath, 'lies the wild tract of Burnham Forest, sloping upwards as it rolls away out of our sight, and spread with lawns of singular beauty, studded with huge forms of beech, and spread with bracken, furze, and bramble, the greensward starred with daisy blooms, and golden with buttercups and trefoil. . . . On now, and upwards, our road continues, under the spreading shadows of beeches on each side of our way, hollow, gnarled, and rugged. The fringe of common is narrow on our left, and we can see, between the leafy interstices, the yellow hue of ripening corn, and the red tinge of the flowering meadow grass; on our right, the forest view alone—great fantastic forms of beech contrasting with the white-patched slender trunks of birch, mossy boles, withered leaves, graceful brake, and dancing shadows, as the wind stirs the foliage above. Now oak and holly mingle their foliage with the prevailing beech; and as we reach the crest of our upland road, the open country bursts upon us on our left, spread with the richest colours which meadow and corn-field can furnish in the height of their summer glory. On the right is the fringe of our forest, with juniper and holly scattered wildly about in the foreground, whilst the view is closed by umbrageous beech. Now the heather mingles with the graceful bracken, and flaunts its purple bells, whilst deep yellow blossoms still cling to the sprays of the broom.'

This is exquisite description: true to Nature in the sense of confused beauty which it conjures up. Few surely can read it without desiring to look for themselves on the picture in its original, either under the splendid radiance of a summer sky, or in the softened sweetness of an autumn day. We cannot more fitly close this little notice

than by joining gratefully in the musical invocation of Henry Luttrell:

O ne'er may woodman's axe resound,  
Nor tempest, making breaches  
In the sweet shade that cools the ground  
Beneath our Burnham Beeches.

## THE ECCENTRIC BACHELOR.

### A CHAPTER OF REAL LIFE.

F— was a living specimen of the typical old bachelor, a personage more often met with in the pages of fiction than in real life; lean and sharp-visaged of aspect, crusty and cynical of temper. He was, moreover, an avowed oddity; one of the privileged class who, by virtue of this reputation, can do what others dare not without exciting surprise or giving offence; whose eccentricities are met with a shrug of the shoulder and the remark: 'What else could you expect of an oddity like him?'

He was an unpopular man, receiving scant sympathy; yet capable nevertheless of kind and generous acts, performed on the condition that they were to be kept strictly secret and that he was never to be thanked for them. Woe betide the recipient of a favour to whom it was brought home that he had mentioned the same to any one, or extolled the kindness of his benefactor! The unlucky wight once detected in thus giving vent to his gratitude, had taken the surest method of cutting himself off from further help. He never got another chance.

Our old bachelor enjoying, as we have said, the privileges of eccentricity, it excited no surprise when on one occasion, after an absence from home, he wrote to inform his servants—an old couple who had lived with him for years—that on his return he would be accompanied by a widow lady, who was likely to make a long stay in his house, and for whom apartments were to be got ready.

'And a pretty upset she'll make!' exclaimed the dismayed old housekeeper. 'A fussy, middle-aged party, no doubt; ordering and interfering and wanting to have everything her own way; which she won't get, John, as long as you and I can prevent her. She'll be a clever madam if she gets her foot inside my storeroom while there's locks and bolts to keep her out, I can tell her!'

'Don't you make too sure,' said John. The old man could not resist now and then teasing his helpmate, as a little set-off against sundry nagging on the part of that good lady. 'Maybe it's a mistress of the house and of yourself that's coming to it. Them widders are great at wheedling. It's time, if the master is ever to marry, that—'

'Ah, stop your croaking now!' cried Mrs John. This dire suggestion was too overpowering for her feelings.

The appointed day arrived; and when the cab drove to the door, the two old domestics, with very sour faces and their backs very much up, went to receive their master and his unwelcome guest. Their first glimpse of the latter shewed them they might have spared their fears and hostile intentions. Out from the cab, before their astonished eyes, sprang a girlish figure, whose bright happy face contrasted curiously with her mourning garments.

'Mind the step, uncle!' ['Oh, his niece, she is!'] she cried, tripping up to the hall-door.—'Don't trouble, please,' with a smile to the old housekeeper; 'that bag is too heavy for you; I'll carry it.'

And when the stranger came down to breakfast next morning with a morsel of a cap perched on the top of her golden braids of hair ('Not my idea of a widow's cap,' said the dame to her husband; 'and would you believe it, John? singing away like a bird while she was dressing!'), she looked absurdly young; more like a girl in her teens than an experienced 'settled' matron.

The advent of his pretty niece made some change in the habits of the old gentleman. He had friends at dinner more frequently than of yore; and in addition to the elderly fogies that formed his usual society, younger guests were invited, suited to the years of his visitor. With grim amusement, her uncle observed the attraction her comeliness and winning ways were for these. 'Swarming round—like flies about a honey-pot! Scenting, I daresay, a fat jointure. All widows are supposed to be rich; and just because she is a widow, and for no other reason, making up to her, the fools!' This to himself with a cynical chuckle. Aloud: 'Nice little woman, sir, that niece of mine. Plenty of good looks; but hasn't a sixpence—not a sixpence to bless herself with!'

It was wonderful how the old house was brightened up by the presence of its blithe young inmate. But by none was its pleasant influence more felt than by the domestics, who had vowed such hostility before her arrival. The old woman especially was devoted to her; loving her for her own sake as well as for the kindly help and good offices she was always receiving from the deft and willing hands of the young girl. In the store-room—that sacred retreat which her foot was never to invade—the latter was to be found on 'company-days,' busy and happy as a bee; with sleeves tucked half-way up her plump arms, her heavy crape skirts stowed away under one of the old lady's capacious holland aprons, and lappets pinned high over her head, while, laughing merrily at the queer figure she had made of herself, she worked away at cakes and sweets, taking a world of trouble off the housekeeper's hands.

'And so thoughtful she is, and gay; bless her!' his wife would tell old John. 'She'll come tripping up to me, and "Now, do as you're bid," she'll say, playful; forcing me down into my big chair. "Sit you down and rest, there's an old dear, and take your tea. I'm not a-going to let you do a turn more." And then she'll work away, her tongue going all the time as fast as her fingers. Running on about her mother and her home, her flowers and pets—dogs and birds, and what not. But never a word about husband or married days. And if I touch upon them or ask a question, she'll get quite silent and strange-like in a minute, and turn off the subject as if it burned her. Perhaps for all she's so merry outside, she's fretting in her heart for him that's gone, and can't a-bear to talk of him.'

'Nothing of the sort!' cried old John. 'Don't you go to think of such stuff. She'd take a husband to-morrow; mark my words. And it's my opinion there's a young gentleman as comes to this house that has a fairish chance. He's

desperate sweet upon her. I haven't eyes in my head for nothing, and I see plain she doesn't dislike him, or hold herself up distant from him, as she does from others.'

Old John was right. Matters were in due time so far satisfactorily settled between the young couple that an appeal to the uncle was deemed expedient. The old gentleman received the announcement with a half-pleased, half-satirical grimace.

'Ha, I thought so!' he muttered. 'But are you aware, my friend, that there is no money in the case? The lady hasn't sixpence, and'—

'I know it,' indignantly interrupted the suitor. 'You have made that remark before. I want no fortune with my wife, my own being ample; and my love'—

'Oh, spare your raptures, young sir. Not so fast. Don't be too sure of the prize; for when you hear what I have to tell you, there may be perhaps a change in your views. I have no time to go into the matter now; but come to-morrow, and be prepared to hear what will surprise you; and the old gentleman went off, nodding back—malevolently, the lover fancied—over his shoulder, and leaving the poor fellow in a state of most uncomfortable suspense and uncertainty.

What could this dark hint mean; and why was he not to make sure? Could it be possible there was any doubt, any mystery as to the demise of the beloved one's husband? He could not help calling to mind her confused and singular manner at times; a certain want of frankness; an evident embarrassment at any allusion to the past. The possibility of an obstacle made the young man realise, as he had not before done, how deeply his affections were engaged. He spent a miserable night, awaiting in vain conjecture and sleepless anxiety the tidings which the morrow might bring forth.

In order to explain matters, it will be necessary to go back for some months previous to the arrival of the young lady at her uncle's house; as well as to change the scene from it to a country cottage in a remote part of England—the home of the widowed sister of the eccentric bachelor. In it we find him pacing up and down the small drawing-room, and listening to the querulous complaints that its occupant, a confirmed invalid, is uttering from the sofa on which she lies. 'I think but little of my bodily sufferings,' she is saying; 'they cannot now last long. Every day I feel more plainly that the end is not far off; and my doctor tells me the same. The distress of mind that torments me is what is so hard to bear.'

'And what may that be about, if I might ask?'

'The future of my child, when I am gone. All I have, as you know, dies with me. She will be penniless; and the thought of what is to become of her, cast on the world without a home, haunts me night and day. It is too dreadful!'

'A girl—and young—and not bad-looking. Where's the fear? Somebody'll marry her. Men are such fools!'

The sick woman could not forbear a smile. 'Ah, but there are no men, no fools here! In this remote corner, we see no one; and the poor child, taken up with nursing me, and tied to a sick-room, has made no acquaintances. It is killing me to

see her young life sacrificed, and to think of the future.'

The mother's tears began to flow. Her hearer, never very amiably inclined towards the weaker sex, or at ease in its company, increased his quarter-deck pacings in much discomfiture as these symptoms of 'water-works turned on' became apparent. His hurried steps soon subsided, however, to a steady march up and down the little drawing-room, while with frowning brow and occasional chuckles, he seemed to be concocting some scheme. After a few minutes he came to a sudden halt before the invalid's sofa. 'Can the girl act?' he asked abruptly.

'Act! How do you mean? I'—

'Oh, you needn't look frightened; I'm not going to propose sending her to the Gaiety or the Criterion.'

'Well, except in the little make-believe plays and dressings-up that children delight in—all children are, I think, actors born' ['Ay, and men and women too,' growled the cynic]—'except that sort of thing, she never has seen or had any opportunity of acting. Why do you ask?'

And in reply, her brother unfolded the plan he had been concocting—namely, that his niece, laying aside her 'frippery and her trinkets and young-girl's nonsense,' was to put on the mourning garb, and act the part of a widow, in which assumed character she was to come to stay with him in his London home.

'But I don't understand'—

'And you're not wanted to understand,' he snarled. 'It's my whim; and it may be for the girl's advantage. If she's willing, and can hold her tongue, I'll come back for her when she's ready. And I'll pay for her outfit. Crape and weepers! Ho, ho, ho!'

When the first surprise at her uncle's strange proposition was over, the young girl jumped eagerly at the prospect of a change from the dull home she never yet had left. She was young and spirited; at an age when love of variety and a longing to see the world and plunge into its unknown delights, are natural. The playing the widow she thought would be excellent fun. There was a spice of adventure in it, and it would be like the private theatricals and acting charades she had read of and imagined so pleasant. The old gentleman's reason for wishing her to do so was a puzzle; but then who would wonder at anything he did? absurd oddity that he was! Perhaps it was to avoid having to provide a chaperon for her; he hated ladies so, elderly ones especially.

The result of the scheme we have seen; and the scheme itself was what its originator proceeded to divulge to the would-be husband when that individual presented himself with considerable misgiving and agitation on the appointed morning.

'As the lady has not turned out to be what you took her for, is not, in fact, a widow, perhaps the whole matter may be off. A disappointment, no doubt,' wound up the uncle with one of his grim chuckles; 'but 'twas only right to tell you in time. Young man, if you can pardon the deceit, take her.'

'Well,' exclaimed the young man to his fiancée, when, all things cleared up and satisfactorily arranged, the engaged pair were talking over the queer circumstance that had brought them

together, 'I always knew your uncle was eccentric, but this surpasses anything I could have imagined even of him.'

#### THE SKYLARK.

HARK to the dropping melody  
From the brown Lark above yon grimy cloud!  
Ambitious traveller! for earth too proud,  
Wouldst join the angels' psalmody?  
Or is the steadfast sun the magnet bright  
That ever to the sky attracts thy flight?

Sing on, thou joyous reveller!  
Pouring tumultuous from thy reedy throat  
Torrents of sound: who heedless hears thy note,  
Is dull, or senseless driveller!  
'Twould seem thou hadst indeed heard heaven's song,  
For strains like thine can ne'er from earth have sprung.

Here, on the cool grass lazily  
Outstretched, I listen to thy happy note,  
And pleasant images upon me float,  
Watching thy form, that hazily  
Shews through slow-moving vapours high above,  
As up in fluttering spirals thou dost move.

So once my soul, awakening  
From thoughtless slumber, sprung to greet the morn,  
And from its depths a merry lay was born;  
Hope stood before me, beckoning,  
And led me forth along a golden way,  
Where sunlight never ceased to beam and play.

Would that all we, here wandering  
About this earth, could sing away our days,  
And ne'er in discontent our voices raise,  
Short life in sorrow squandering;  
And would that we to toil as blithely bent,  
As thou ascendest through the firmament.

The nightingale's sweet sorrowing  
Lulls us with fantasy and idle dreams,  
Till all the world to our charmed vision seems—  
From solemn music borrowing  
Soft magic—a fair place of pleasant pain,  
Wherein to dream, and sigh, and dream again.

Thy song is bright and vigorous,  
Seeming to summon men to active lives,  
Boldly proclaiming he who nobly strives  
'Gainst evils that beleaguer us,  
And faces manfully his worldly work,  
Shall prosper well—they ill who duty shirk.

When twilight shades cross drearily  
The sinking day, and all afeld is still,  
Save the vexed murmur of the restless rill,  
Like stone thou faltest, wearily,  
To earth, and, steeping in the dew thy breast,  
Secretly creepest to thy hidden nest.

J. T. G.

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